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Vervreemding en verslaving

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SUMMARY

At the base of this study lies a personal, psychotherapeutic contact with the ninety patients, who were admitted to the Sanatorium for male alcoholics „Hoog Hullen” in Eelde, during the period between the end of 1958 and July 1960.

We have not attended specifically to the problem of alcoholism as such, but rather to the character-structure of those suffering from it. We have come to see these men not primarily as forming a very special group of psychiatric patients – which they are – differing in any very specific sense from other men, disturbed or not, but as rather sensitive indicators of the kind of pathogenic trends which influence our western society today, leading, in those who are susceptible to it, because of their constitution and early experience, to a kind of neurosis which can be defined in terms of Erikson as „identity-diffusion”: „The patient of today suffers most under the problem of what he should believe in and who he should – or indeed, might – be or become” (Childhood and Society).

This has thus become a study on identity and alienation, on the real and the idealized self-image, on narcissistic defense against deeply rooted self-hate, on masks and boredom and addiction, on the „Krankheit zum Tode” (Kierkegaard).

In *chapter one*, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, a man is described who drank so secretly, that in his I-am-not-I defense (Agoston), his righteous, self-sufficient Self, hardly knew what his Shadow-self did. He had grown up in a Super-ego and Persona directed atmosphere: „you have to be what we want you to be and we want you to be what our morals prescribe” – in the eyes of the world, that is. It was a very narrow-minded atmosphere: much letter and little spirit.

Some kind of definition of key-words is then given, like: Alienation, Self and Self-image or Self-concept; we insist on the frequent combination in narcissistic personalities, of an exaggerated major and minor variant of the self-concept, both false and both „intended” to escape the necessity of living up to one's inner and outer reality (Le Coultre). With regard to self-alienation, one can distinguish an active form, resulting in the attempt to built up a fake-personality and a passive form, resulting in boredom, indifference and the like.

Chapter two, on the unauthentic personality, goes on to deal with the

first group. In relation to their general way of overestimating themselves, with ideas of grandiosity, and their habit of denying not only their alcoholism, but also all kind of failures and shortcomings, most alcoholics show an unusual degree of unauthenticity in their self-presentation. However, in its superficial form, this is a more or less conscious affair, a façade which can be rather easily taken away. But when it comes to a really neurotic structure, things are far more complicated. In order to give a detailed picture of what is meant, we have undertaken to describe this kind of neurotic façade-man, under three, not altogether different, aspects:

1. identification of the conscious self with the Super-ego (Freud);
2. identification with the Persona („social ego”) (Jung) and
3. identification with the Idealized Self (Karen Horney), giving a description of the meaning of the concepts concerned.

These people it seems, have been sufficiently hurt and tossed about in their childhood, to have lost all confidence in the possibilities of their real self and have set out to create a (narcissistic) Ideal-self, in order to safeguard their selfesteem and to be, if they cannot be who they are, at least „somebody”: They are extremely sensitive and easily hurt, very much dependent on the judgment and appraisal of others and not quite natural in their affective self-expressions. They tend to quick over-identifications, stimulus-hunger, chronic depersonalization, etc. In their „Search for glory” (Horney), their way of life compares with what is called by Beirnaert: „L'existence en fonction de l'être vu.” They are never really original in their creativity, but can be very artful in using opportunities and making the most of other people's talents. They can hold important and respected positions in society, but show unexpected prejudices or fall prey to certain perversions or addictions, which however – as long as they live up to their mask – they do not allow to interfere with their public lives.

Chapter three, on insufficient fatherhood, describes a striking feature in a large proportion of our case-histories: the existence of a very negative father-image. These fathers were mostly weak, psychologically speaking absent, inconsistent escapists or otherwise – i.e. in an aggressive-tyrannical and egotistic way – unacceptable as identification-objects. The consequence, among other things, is that the son remains uncertain as to his manly role and identity and too much attached to his – dominating and/or spoiling – mother, often filling, in her emotional and/or economical life, the place that his father left open. Alcoholics, consciously, identify more often with their mother than with their father.

The second part of this chapter is devoted to general cultural trends related to „the fall of fatherhood” in our time. We note: (a) the disappearance of the „pater familias” with his unquestioned authority, democratic tendencies etc. destroying the patriarchal structure of society; (b) the fact that less and less responsibility befalls more and more men in their industrial and administrative jobs, undermining thus at the same

time their command in the family; (c) the devaluation of tradition: „Das Denken in Zusammenhang der Generationen hört auf” (Köberle).

In consequence, instead of leaning on a fixed *Persona*, fathers of to day have only their personal worth and values on which to base their authority – if this is accepted at all – with respect to their wife and children. Other factors are: (a) disappearance of the „work-image” (Mitscherlich) through which the father used to teach his sons and give them their place in society; (b) the motherly character of the welfare state (Rosenberg), repudiating all that has to do with personal government, selection, structuring, differentiation, hierarchical ordering of values, formation of an aristocracy, etc.; and, finally, (c) the secularization of our society, which previously, being a christian civilization, connected the individual father-image to the existence of God: „The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Eph. 3:14,15).

In *Chapter four*, we have tried to give an account of the complex theories on identification, guided by such authors as Freud, Fenichel, Jacobson, Spitz, Hesnard and others. This was done, because disturbances in the process of identification are a main source of trouble in identity-formation; and here again we have concentrated on the father-son relationship. It is possible that the role of the individual parent becomes a greater, and easier source of neurotic development, when there are less possibilities of compensation and orientation and guiding, emanating from society as a whole, f.i. in the form of prototypic, transcendental, ideal figures and universally acknowledged values, which serve as a frame of reference both for parents and children.

Identification is a proces characterized by the simultaneous movement of projection and introjection: „une mise en soi de l'autre et une mise en l'autre de soi” (Hesnard), in which we come to resemble the other, at the same time retaining our own individuality. In this situation, in which we look at ourselves through the eyes of somebody else, thus learning to know ourselves we meet alienation not in its pathological form, but as a normal and necessary element in development, in the „dialectique structurante” of growth. Looking in the mirror, I am at the same time myself and the other.

Different aspects of identification and its relation to imitation are then described.

Subsequently we have followed identification through the different phases of development, as conceived by psychoanalysis: Commencing in the archaic darkness of the „adual stage” (Piaget), proceeding through oral introjection and rejection, to the „affecto-motor” and magical „as-if identifications” (Jacobson), play- and imitation-identifications, to the realistic ego- and superego-identifications, relating the theory on ego-ideal and idealized self and discovering in *the true ideal self*, a faithfulness to one's own past and tradition, while reaching out in the future. It is an image in the future, that echoes the past and reflects like a prophecy, one's inner and real potentialities and destiny; and it is not a

utopian scheme, unrooted from personal history by arbitrary phantasy and revolution. Next come the work-identifications (Erikson) in latency and finally the identifications in puberty with admired people, religious and ideological ideas and ideals.

In the last part of this chapter, we have stressed *the personal choice in identifications*; i.e. each child identifies only with certain aspects of the adult, and again of the adult *as it sees him*. What is introjected is „a portrait in a mirror” (Charles Morgan), but again, a living mirror, giving its own stamp to the image reflected. For not only does the child make a „choice” from its parents, but the parents, in counter-identification with the child, stress one aspect of him and efface another. This can become a dangerous source of pathology, when parents want their children to succeed in exactly those sectors of life, where they themselves most shamefully failed. Moreover, children are frequently seen to act out, in the form of a negative identity, the suppressed Shadow of very ambitious-ethical parents. Finally it is mentioned how total identification (projective identification, Melanie Klein), can lead to complete identityloss.

As a warning against too much dogmatic belief in psychodynamic „legislation”, de Saint Exupéry is quoted, reminding us „que la vie fait toujours craquer les formules.”

Chapter five is devoted to identity. Erik Erikson made this concept the central theme of his theory on psychosocial development. Psychosocial development runs parallel to, but in strong interaction with, psychosexual development. At the beginning of maturity, the foundation of one's identity must be laid and its ultimate form known, in the sense of a general direction of growth in relation to one's place and task in society. Identity is the result of what I am and can be, and what I am expected and made to be. It is related to a well-established self-concept and to the existence of definite and institutionalized values. Since – with the disappearance of christianity as the unifying cornerstone of our civilisation – such an orientation-scheme is greatly lacking, „The search for identity” is a major factor in present day neurosis. Who am I? Where do I belong? Where should I go? What do I believe in? – We are children of „The age of longing” (Arthur Koestler).

After a short historical survey of the meaning of the word identity, the problem of adaptation is posed: to what degree should I conform to what is expected of me, without compromising with the integrity of my own life-style. Various hidden procedures of „brain-washing” are called to mind, as well as the *alienating influences of our machine age* with its tendency to reduce man to rawmaterial and set up the robot as his ideal-type, in order to use him better for the functioning of a mechanized society: „Damit geschah und geschieht die Ablösung des Menschen von jedem Boden. Er wird Erdbewohner ohne Heimat. Er verliert die Kontinuität der Tradition. Der Geist reduziert sich auf Lernbarkeiten und Abrichtung zu brauchbaren Funktionen” (Karl Jaspers, 1955). It means a deliberate destruction of every sense of identity.

We then returned to the individual life-history, tracing back the beginnings of identity-formation to „the baby's earliest exchange of smiles" (Erikson) and the development of the body-image, „l'image vécue du corps", the core of every self-concept. Following such authors as Phyllis Greenacre, Mahler, Alby and Lichtenstein, the great importance of the sexual aspect hereof – sexual identity – has been stressed and illustrated. Finally it is suggested that on formal grounds – i.e. knowledge of one's name and description – one might place the first identity-consciousness at the beginning of the third year, when the child is capable of recognizing its mirror-image and calling it by its name.

In the third part of this chapter we have tried to compose a survey from the different writings of Erikson on psychosocial development. The phases Erikson describes are named thus: Basic trust versus Basic mistrust; Autonomy vs Shame; Initiative vs Guilt; Industry vs Inferiority; Identity vs Identity-diffusion; Intimacy vs Isolation; Generativity vs Self-absorption and Intergity vs Despair.

As an illustration we finished this chapter with the casehistory of the least disturbed of our patients.

Chapter six is on unaccomplished identity and it means a return to patients and case-histories and also to the theme of chapter two, this time in terms of the „alienated identity" (Schachtel). It is stated that alcoholics suffer to a remarkable degree from all kind of identity-disturbances: they are extremely inconsistent, searching, isolated, eternally dissatisfied and „homeless" people, without a proper past and future, unable to loose their life and find it. An alcoholics sanatorium therefore resembles the puberty-ward of a child-psychiatric hospital. Even among „cured" alcoholics, Gerard and Saenger found only 10 percent who had achieved „some measure of identity."

The *alienated identity* alcoholics pretend, is largely centered around an imaginary will-power. Being rather weak and passive, they believe in a façade of „manly" behaviour. And heavy drinking is one way of being a man – you are not a real man if you can not „stand your liquor" –; and drunk, you feel the omnipotent, generous or aggressive man you want to be, at the same time satisfying the infantile-passive urge to be warm, safe, cared for, surrounded by friendship, etc. You can feel a man amongst men, bragging on your sexual potency, without having to prove your worth with respect to the other sex.

It is argued that the general lack of sufficient sexual identity, fear for the adult manly role, does not coincide per se with (latent) homosexuality, as orthodox psychoanalytic theory would have it with regard to alcoholics (Fenichel a.o.).

Will-power is proved, for instance, in the fighting off of the toxic effect of the alcohol: the counter-phobic mechanism in addiction (Szasz). We then proceed to show that the problem a man makes from his alcoholism, is often alcoholism as a substituting conflict: substitute for a far more threatening, intrapsychic conflict, which is denied triumphantly:

„If only I can stop drinking, there is nothing wrong with me”: Their fight against the alcohol, is really the struggle against an unknown and therefore all the more dangerous enemy: the hated self, the revengeful introjects. It is also shown, that alcohol serves at the same time Ego, Superego and Id.

Subsequently we have presented a series of case-histories to illustrate the point of „will-power” – i.e. infantile stubbornness presented as such – of the often greatly disturbed sexual identity and many other facets of „identity-diffusion”: fear for loss of identity, identity-consciousness, identity-resistance and the like. The „time-diffusion” is especially mentioned, i.e. a mistrust of time as such, which causes these people to live without a proper concept of the future. Therefore time-diffusion is related to adherence to what Freud has called the lustprinciple. These patients remain at this – i.e. the infantile-narcissistic – side of the „time-barrier”, they do not cross over the frontier, into historical time and thus they do not make history.

It is seen eventually, that alcohol, with all it promises, in the end destroys the mask of manliness and exposes exactly that abject negative identity, it was called to suppress: that is alcoholism in the service of self-destruction. It is this same identity of to-be-an-alcoholic, that, in a positive form, gives a new sense of identity to AA-members, where it also serves a rather would-be form of frankness and fraternity, betraying the underlying sense of isolation.

Chapter seven, is a treatise on boredom. Boredom is a dominant feature in many an alcoholic's existence. It is conceived as a passive form of self-alienation, in so far as those who are „just bored”, do not try to identify with an idealized self, not in a concrete way; but just as those who do, they have nonetheless no access to their inner depth and sources. Having found a relation between weekend-drinking and Sunday-boredom, we state that alcoholism quite often begins as a „Sunday-neurosis” (Ferenczi). Since the bored have no real interests and friends, finding them a hobby can be a substantial contribution in the treatment of alcoholics.

Boredom can be seen, as Luypen sees it: a reaction of the ego, in a situation where one or more dominant longings remain unsatisfied. As Fenichel says: „Etwas erwartetes tritt nicht ein.” Different forms of boredom are discussed. Seen from the point of view of the victim of boredom, it means despairing of the future (Revers), it means a situation of captivity (Bilz), a disturbing feeling of emptiness and a suffering under time. For these „esclaves martyrisés du temps” (Baudelaire), who are in need „to kill time”, intoxication has been of old a wellcome solution for want of an authentic self-realization.

With Bilz, a biological foundation for boredom is found in a disequilibrium between „Expansion-pressure” (on the side of the subject) and „Stimulation-pressure” (on the side of the Umwelt).

For psychoanalysis (Fenichel, Tamarin), boredom is the result, when an instinctual *aim* has been suppressed, and the instinctual *tension* is

preserved. Since satisfaction of this tension is now impossible, an intense, hectic stimulus-hunger is the result. (Suppression of both aim and tension leads to indifference).

Relating the instinctual aims that are suppressed, there follows a description of the role of aggression in alcoholics: „They use their passivity in the most aggressive way” (Menninger); they use their drinking as a weapon against those who thwart them, presenting themselves at the same time as helpless, pityfull children. After this the blocking of phantasy is discussed and the impossibility of being passive with regard to the Self. Finally, guided by Bibring, the relation of boredom with depression is explained. *Depression* is seen as the result of a collapse of the self-esteem of an Ego, that feels not equal to its aspirations (ego-ideal). Since, however, these aspirations are not lowered or altered, the depressed remains goal-directed and the ego is the guilty one. The bored, on the contrary, has suppressed his – narcissistic – aims and awaits the solution for his helplessness from the outside world.

The last part of this chapter is devoted to general influences that seem to promote boredom: dechristianisation (Tardieu), „Entmythologisierung”, rationalization of our world-image and progressing mechanization: „To many it appears a toss-up whether we shall die by blast or boredom” (Allen Wheelis).

Furthermore we mentioned the existence of too many possibilities of choice: the more one can expect or do, the more one can „consider” (a reflective act!) that one is bored with what one does. We have referred in this same context, to mass-culture and mass-production of mass-man: „The lonely crowd” (Riesman), „craving to be distracted from distraction by distraction” (E.v. Haag).

Lastly Kierkegaard is cited as being the first to state that the flight for boredom, always bears the characteristics of addiction.

Chapter eight is more or less a summing up of our impressions on the psychology of alcoholism and a confrontation with literature – with most rewarding results. Apparently one cannot speak of „the” alcoholic personality, in any specific sense.

But none the less, most pre-alcoholics appear to have certain characteristics in common. We find our impressions completely confirmed by the only longitudinal and comparative study on alcoholics known, i.e. that of the McCord's, using the data of the Cambridge Sommerville Youth Project. These authors conclude (1) to the existence of an „intense dependency conflict,” owing to „erratic satisfaction of dependency desires” in childhood, by highly inconsistent parents; and (2) to the fact that alcoholics have „a confused image of the male role” resp. „an inadequate selfimage” because „there seems to have been reason for the alcoholics to reject the masculine role represented by their fathers”; (3) the pre-alcoholic child resolves these conflicts by assuming a façade of intense masculinity (aggression, hyperactivity, independence, self-confidence) to assure himself of a sense of identity; (4) through increased drinking „his repressed

traits of dependency, inferiority and passivity become openly manifested" (Joan and William McCord). We have further elaborated this basic character-structure, taking as a starting point the five points enumerated by Zwerling concerning alcoholics: *a.* They are schizoid – basic sense of estrangement etc., *b.* They have persistent passive-dependent longings, in which *c.* they are inevitably frustrated; with as a result basic sense of futility, selfloathing, sadness, boredom and the like. *d.* They are hostile. *e.* They are sexually immature (Zwerling).

The meaning of intoxication as a „*entgrenzende Begegnung*" (Matussek) is discussed. Furthermore it is very useful to distinguish, as Matussek does, between the „*addictive attitude*" („*süchtige Haltung*") and the „*manifest addiction*." The former is the ground on which the latter can grow. The addictive attitude is related to a „fundamental passive-receptive narcissistic attitude" and can be recognized in all kinds of activities like work, reading, eating, in fact almost anything one can think of; not to be forgotten the mode of contact with others: a selfish and grasping relationship („*verschlingender Weltbezug*", Matussek). They cannot give themselves and cannot love another for what he is in himself, his values and liberty, and are insatiable in their exigencies, trying, with Baudelaire, „*a vivre la vie de tous ces autres*." „They suck you out," is a common complaint of workers with alcoholics.

Therefore, if possible, one should not only „cure" the symptom „alcoholism", but also attend to the underlying „addictive attitude", which is a form of psychoneurosis.

Finally we have understood with von Gebattel, addictive drinking as the „escape for an unbearable situation of inner emptiness – the vacuum of an obstructed self-realization." The curse of the drinker is a „Nicht-werden-können." Without *durée*, he is delivered unto „the time of the clock" and that – alas – leads to selfdestruction (also Zutt, Strauss a.o.). Desperately, the addicted does not want to be who he is – that is his „*Krankheit zum Tode*."

Working from the striking degree of self-alienation which impressed us in alcoholics, the statement of von Gebattel, that the direct sensation which is sought for in intoxication – of any kind – is an artificial „*Sich-selbstfühlen*", seems a logical conclusion.

There is no substitute in the world that can fill up his emptiness. Alcohol, to the addict, presents itself as this life-elixir, but is an „*Elixiere des Teufels*". For alcoholism is a disease, that in the end always reinforces its cause and motives.